

Kuwait/Algeria

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AMB. SHANOUN: Thank you, Ms. Orleans. Thank you all for being here (inaudible) speak to you about Algeria, or about actually the specific theme which I choose for this morning, and which I call "Algeria and Conflict Resolutions."

In fact, there were a number of tentative arrangements which were made previously to come and meet with you and talk about Algeria, our national policy and the economic reforms which we are attempting to undertake in the country, which are discussed actually in various organs, in various agencies, but which are maybe not known to the large public; talking also about the foreign policy of Algeria, the precipice on which this foreign policy is based and its main features, and maybe explain some of the purposes, which are also not always understood by the public at large.

We might be in the question period dealing with it. In fact, I will probably be dealing with it partly in the course of my introduction. But I thought that in view of recent events, it might be useful to try to do it on this aspect of our foreign policy, which is, as I said before, the conflict resolution approach.

Algeria has a singular history, like, to some extent, a number of other Mediterranean countries. We have known a series of invasions. And all these left an imprint on our character and on our behavior, to some extent. We have known the invasions of the Phoenicians, of the Romans, of the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Turks, and lately of the French. Now the French colonial domination is less (?) specific, in a sense. We were a very, very large colony, but very close to the colonial power. Algiers was an hour away from Marseilles. And you imagine then that for the French, who have declared Algeria as a French department, or a series of French departments, it was a country which they thought and dreamed and hoped that it will be forever French. They had one million Frenchmen living in Algeria. In fact, they attempted to practically forget about our basic culture, our language, Arabic, was considered as a foreign language in Algeria, we could not learn in the French schools, Arabic. We had to go to -- some of us who had the chance to go to a private school could learn Arabic, otherwise, it was not possible.

Our main feature of our traditional culture, were more or less uprooted. If you compare our society today with -- even today -- with our neighboring brotherly states in Tunisia and Morocco, you will see that we have lost, in fact, much of the features which are still present in the society: much of the artistic traditions, and so on. Our traditions, were, in a sense, largely uprooted, because of the long and strong colonial domination -- which explains also

how, when we decided to struggle for independence, when we decided to liberate ourselves, the difficulties with which we had to face. There was a million Frenchmen living in Algeria. As I said, the French colonial power was not far away, they were able to bring all the reinforcements or the troops, they were able to bring. Therefore, the war was long and protracted and was extremely difficult.

We had a guerrilla warfare, which was, in fact, trying to embarrass more than really trying to win the war, that was not realistic to think that we, with our small means, without potential, we have small potential, could win over war against a big colonial power, which was -- still is -- a NATO country with, of course, its alliances and the assistance they could receive. So it was a difficult war, and for us, it wasn't really, at any time, the thought did not occur to us that we will win the war, militarily speaking. But, in fact, this was only to sustain what we -- what was, on the other hand, a political action, a diplomatic action, which extended far away and went to the point of, in fact, mobilizing all our cadres and our resources to try to convince people around the world for the need for our independence.

We opened a mission in New York, in the late '50's, and we also opened missions around the world. We sent people around the world to be trained. I was one of those who were trained here in the United States. There were a number of our -- we had no students outside of Algeria before we started our struggle. In fact, had we had even very few students, in the whole University of Algiers there was, maybe about 100 Algerian students out of 4,000 students, the others being French. We were doing our struggle for independence, we were able to train more people than were trained before our -- we started our struggle.

And these people acquired a lot of skills, and many of them were mobilized, in a sense, and they were involved in helping persuade and explain our struggle, and the reasons for our struggle, and the purpose in our struggle.

So, this went on for seven years and a half and we achieved, at the time, a number of political and diplomatic victories. We were able to be part of a number of fora, which, in fact, we even helped to put -- to organize. We were 1955 in Bandung, Algeria -- the Algerian leaders were together with the Indonesian leader, with Sukharno, with Nehru, with a number of other third world leaders. We were together. We were not -- it was a small forum, but Algeria was there, it was recognized by these states.

We were in Monrovia in 1960, with the first African gathering. We were also in 1961, the first Non-Aligned movement, first Non-Aligned conference in 1961, in Belgrade. Algeria was recognized as an independent -- as a provisional government recognized by the others of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Then I would like to mention to you especially here in the

United States that, in 1957, because of our action here on the United States scene and our mission in New York, we had very good contacts with a number of American politicians. And we were able to have the endorsements of the then-well-known politician, Senator -- Senator John F. Kennedy. In 1957, he made a statement in the Senate saying that Algeria deserves self-determination and independence. That aroused a lot of anger in France. They were very unhappy with our statements -- especially that the Senator had then already expectations for the Presidency and so on. So, there was a great -- very strong reaction on the French side. But, for us in Algeria, it was a tremendous psychological boost and tremendous psychological support. So, this is, in a sense, to explain to you how, because of this experience, because of this struggle, we were able to articulate some kind of skill among our cadres and our people to be able to negotiate. And, in fact, we were having some contacts with the French, and there were a number of meetings in Milan, in Rome; and, finally, we were able to sit at the negotiating table in Avignon and achieve our independence -- an agreement with the French in March 1962, then independence in July 1962.

In fact, very soon after our independence, in 1962, our delegation came in October 1962 to the United Nations to be admitted as a new member in the United Nations Organization, on October 8th, 1962. I am going to tell you here a story which probably is unknown to most of you, but which is in the line of my discourse, of my statement today -- that in October 1962 was invited, which were in New York, was invited to come to visit Washington, to have a meeting here with the President, so we came -- I came -- I was myself with the Foreign Minister -- we came down here to prepare for the visit of our delegation. Dean Rusk was Secretary of State, so we had some discussion. We explained, more or less, the situation in Algeria, the destructions which had occurred after 7-1/2 years of war, and our aspiration to build up our country, and so on.

And then, in the discussion we noticed that the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was rather -- was rather uneasy. And then, when we ended the discussion, the Secretary said, "Well, we have listened carefully to what you said, and we are certainly very much in sympathy with -- with your -- with the situation, and we would be glad to help, but there is a question which I want to raise with you. I understand you are going to go to Cuba from here. We -- of course, you are a sovereign country. You are free to go wherever you want. We just heard that you want Cuban -- you asked that a Cuban plane could come and land in New York to take your delegation to Cuba, and this we are not going to allow. We have a problem with Cuba. We have a number of corporations who have some legal suits against a Cuban airline, and we will not allow this plane to land and to take you to Cuba."

Well, we -- the discussion ended there. We were not happy with the -- with this opposition, and we went back to New York, reported to our delegation, and then we decided that we should not carry on with our visit here to Washington, go maybe to Mexico, and then from

there go and do -- undertake our visit to Cuba. We are a non-aligned country. We are very strong in our beliefs, and we don't want people to dictate our foreign policy.

Then a call came from the White House to New York, and said, "Forget about what happened. On the level of Foreign Minister, we want your delegation to come to Washington." We came down here to Washington, and it was then that we were shown the evidence about the missiles in Cuba, that was, we understood then the background of the story that there was this crisis which was in the offing. In fact, there was already talks about it, but it had not reached the climax of it.

So, we worked hard -- the visit went on quite well here, and then, we were shown this evidence and, in fact, we even thought it would be good if you tell the Cubans how dangerous the situation is and how serious the situation is, and that's what we did. We went from here, and the plane came, and it landed here and it took our delegation to Havana. We went to Havana, and the first thing our delegation did was to really make the Cubans aware of the seriousness of the situation, of the importance of the situation.

Now, as I said, this is a story which is not normal. This shows already that really only a few weeks after we became independent, we were more or less involved in an attempt to participate or to contribute to a conflict resolution. In fact, there was hardly really a year after that that we did not -- we were not involved in trying to help negotiate one conflict or another.

Outright in 1963, the African countries were more or less divided into two blocks -- one called the Casablanca Group which was the progressive, or so-called "progressive" group of countries, and there was another group which was the Monrovia-Brazaville which was a more moderate. Algeria was instrumental in trying to bring these two groups together.

I was -- I remember myself -- going at the time traveling in between these different capitals and making a lot of a (inaudible), and we were part of the Casablanca Group. And some of the members of the Casablanca Group were not very happy with our endeavors, with our efforts. But we felt it was absolutely important that the African states should get together. And that's how we, in fact, prepared, together with a number of other countries, prepared the platform for the Organization of African Unity, which was going to be constituted and created in 1963. In 1968, we had, in fact, one of the first hijackings. It was in a plane from an El Al jet, which landed in Algeria, and we successfully negotiated the release of the plane. And the team went and the El Al plane was able to leave Algeria.

In 1969, we were able to also participate and contribute to a reconciliation between Morocco and Mauritania. As you probably remember, Morocco was for some time claiming the whole of Mauritania as part of Morocco, and Mauritania was supported by a large number